

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 26, 2020

The Honorable R.D. James  
Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works  
Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army  
108 Army Pentagon  
Washington DC, 20310

Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon  
Chief of Engineers and Commanding General  
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers  
441 G Street NW  
Washington, DC 20314-1000

Dear Assistant Secretary James and Lieutenant General Scott A. Spellmon:

As you prepare the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Work Plan for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Civil Works, we urge you to include a new start for a construction project through the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program (NESP). We appreciate that the Corps included \$4.5 million for preconstruction engineering and design (PED) of the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway System projects in the FY20 Work Plan. A new start will allow the momentum of this work to continue; it is our understanding that, with a new start, the Corps would be ready for a construction award worth several million dollars for a project under NESP.

Authorized in 2007, NESP is a critically important multi-purpose program that allows the Corps to address both navigation and ecosystem restoration in an integrated approach that construct new locks at seven existing sites, thereby opening the river up to two-way traffic. Additionally, NESP provides a comprehensive ecosystem restoration for the Upper Mississippi and Illinois Rivers. Our nation's water infrastructure plays a critical role in maintaining our competitiveness in the global economy by ensuring the safest, least expensive, most environmentally-friendly, and most efficient movement of goods to market, but the current backlog of outstanding water infrastructure projects pending before the Corps is putting that competitiveness at risk. As this infrastructure continues to age (currently well past its intended lifetime) the risk of catastrophic failure grows. It is imperative that we address this issue before – not after – such a failure occurs.

NESP maintains broad, bipartisan support in Congress, and, in recent fiscal years, both the House and Senate Energy and Water Appropriations bills and reports have included continued funding for PED and called for the Corps to advance projects authorized in Title VIII of the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (PL 110-114).

We urge the Corps to move forward with a new construction start for NESP in the FY21 Work Plan. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,

Cheri Bustos  
Member of Congress

Jason Smith  
Member of Congress

Richard J. Durbin  
U.S. Senator

Roy Blunt  
U.S. Senator

**Co-signers:**

U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin  
U.S. Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr.  
U.S. Senator Tammy Duckworth  
U.S. Senator Joni K. Ernst  
U.S. Senator Chuck Grassley  
U.S. Senator Josh Hawley  
U.S. Senator Amy Klobuchar  
U.S. Senator Tina Smith  
U.S. Senator John Kennedy  
U.S. Representative Cindy Axne  
U.S. Representative Don Bacon  
U.S. Representative Mike Bost  
U.S. Representative Sean Casten  
U.S. Representative Wm. Lacy Clay  
U.S. Representative Emanuel Cleaver, II  
U.S. Representative Angie Craig  
U.S. Representative Jim Cooper  
U.S. Representative Danny Davis  
U.S. Representative Rodney Davis  
U.S. Representative Abby Finkenauer  
U.S. Representative Bill Foster  
U.S. Representative Sam Graves  
U.S. Representative Glenn Grothman  
U.S. Representative Jim Hagedorn

U.S. Representative Vicky Hartzler  
U.S. Representative Robin L. Kelly  
U.S. Representative Ron Kind  
U.S. Representative Steve King  
U.S. Representative Adam Kinzinger  
U.S. Representative Raja Krishnamoorthi  
U.S. Representative Darin LaHood  
U.S. Representative Daniel W. Lipinski  
U.S. Representative Dave Loebsack  
U.S. Representative Billy Long  
U.S. Representative Blaine Luetkemeyer  
U.S. Representative Steve King  
U.S. Representative Roger Marshall  
U.S. Representative Collin Peterson  
U.S. Representative Mark Pocan  
U.S. Representative Mike Quigley  
U.S. Representative Bobby Rush  
U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky  
U.S. Representative Bradley S. Schneider  
U.S. Representative John Shimkus  
U.S. Representative Pete Stauber  
U.S. Representative Bryan Steil  
U.S. Representative Lauren Underwood  
U.S. Representative Ann Wagner

**CC:**

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250